

PRISONER RE-ENTRY

Issues and Answers



CENTER FOR FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES



U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20210



The Issues

- ◆ On December 31, 2002, over 2.1 million Americans were held in Federal or state prisons or county jails, and over 4.7 million men and women were under Federal, state, or local probation or parole jurisdiction. The cost of housing one inmate per year ranges from \$20,000 to \$25,000 at Federal and state correctional facilities. *(Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics)*
- ◆ This year, 860,000 men, women, and juveniles—1.8 million over the next three years—will be released from Federal, state, and local correctional facilities. Without intervention, over two-thirds of these individuals will be re-arrested for serious new felony offenses within three years. *(Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics and Public/Private Ventures)*
- ◆ A U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) study of re-offense costs found that every 1,000 releases result in 283 new crimes with victimization costs of over \$5 million and criminal justice costs of more than \$340,000. *(Source: DOJ Special Report, "Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994")*
- ◆ That same DOJ study found that recidivists commit, on average, at least two additional crimes before they are re-arrested, re-sentenced, and re-incarcerated. The cost to the community and the victims would average \$35,000 per recidivist. *(Source: DOJ Special Report, "Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994")*
- ◆ An unemployed ex-offender is three times more likely to return to prison than an employed ex-offender. A 1996 study in New York State showed that 89 percent of parole and probation violators were unemployed at the time of re-arrest. *(Source: Texas Department of Justice, 1990 and State of New York Department of Labor, 1996)*
- ◆ Returning offenders are highly concentrated in urban communities. In Illinois, 51 percent of ex-offenders returned to Chicago, with six neighborhoods—Austin, Humboldt Park, North Lawndale, Englewood, West Englewood, and East Garfield Park—receiving 34 percent of the Chicago ex-offender cohort. *(Source: Urban Institute)*
- ◆ A State of Ohio study found that 22 percent of all Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections prisoners released in 2001 returned to Cuyahoga County; of these, 79 percent were returned to the City of Cleveland. *(Source: Urban Institute)*
- ◆ In Maryland, 59 percent of prisoners returned to Baltimore City in 2001. Within Baltimore City, returnees are concentrated in just a few neighborhoods, including Southwest Baltimore, Greater Rosemont, and Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park. Some of these neighborhoods received more than 200 released prisoners in 2001, exceeding the number that returned to some counties in Maryland. *(Source: Urban Institute)*

The Answers

- ◆ Sky-high recidivism rates are an opportunity to show how faith-based organizations succeed where traditional approaches have failed.
- ◆ Urban faith leaders have identified the problem of reducing recidivism as the most important issue facing urban communities. The persistently high levels of crime in these communities causes physical harm to residents, retards economic development, negatively impacts families and undermines the social services efforts of both government and private organizations.
- ◆ An expanded prisoner reentry program modeled on the U.S. Department of Labor's Ready4Work Initiative can help meet the "deepest felt need" of urban leaders and build upon the successes of faith-based and community groups that are reducing crime and recidivism.
- ◆ Bridge to Hope in Bend, Oregon assists 60 female offenders per year and achieves a 90% success rate working with women returning from prison and a 70% success rate with women returning from jail.
- ◆ In 2002, Exodus Transitional Community in East Harlem, NY served 213 individuals with just six returning to prison. This year, Exodus served 290 to date with three participants returning to prison.
- ◆ The City of Memphis Second Chance Program has served over 1,500 ex-offenders over the past three years with only four returning to prison.
- ◆ Allen County and Ft. Wayne, IN operate a two-year old reentry program in one of the worst areas of Ft. Wayne and achieved a 66 percent success rate over 12 months. This program saved the city and county nearly \$1 million each year in policing, court, incarceration, and victimization costs.
- ◆ Employment is a key to stopping recidivism. Focus groups conducted by DOL CFBCI found employers willing to help – if faith-based and community leaders work with and vouch for the reliability of the ex-offender.



